

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 IO-14 ISO-00 SAM-01 AID-20 OMB-01

TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 CIEP-02 EB-11 COME-00 ACDA-19 NIC-01 ARA-16

SWF-02 SPM-01 AGR-20 DRC-01 /239 W

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R 161245Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9471

INFO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

AMCONSUL DOUALA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 4509

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, GB, EK

SUBJECT: EQUATORIAL GUINEA-GABON BORDER INCIDENTS

REF: LIBREVILLE 0850

SUMMARY: SPANISH FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS NO PRECISE
EXPLANATION FOR EG TROOP INCURSION INTO GABON, ALTHOUGH
IT HAD RECEIVED REPORTS OF THE INCIDENTS. BELIEVES ACTION
MAY BE ATTRIBUTABLE TO EFFORTS BY MACIAS TO CONSOLIDATE
DETERIORATING INTERNAL SITUATION. EG APPEARS TO BE IN
STATE OF SERIOUS ECONOMIC STAGNATION AND MONETARY
CONFUSION, AFTER MORATORIUM OF ALMOST A YEAR ON ISSUANCE
OF IMPORT LICENSES AND TRANSFERS OF FUNDS. SPANISH HOPE
TO BROADEN EG RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, HAVE
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ALREADY APPROACHED CANADIANS AND HOPE TO GENERATE SOME

INTEREST IN LATIN AMERICA. MACIAS SEEMS TO BE TURNING AROUND SOMEWHAT, HAVING RECENTLY RECEIVED SOUTH KOREANS AND APPARENTLY AGREED TO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. AT SAME TIME HE HAS ASKED SPANISH FOR FLOUR AND RICE, COMMODITIES PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED BY SOVIETS AND CHINESE. END SUMMARY.

1. SPANISH MFA OFFICIAL (CASINELLO) INFORMED EMBASSY OFFICER JULY 12 THAT GOS AWARE OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA TROOP INCURSION INTO GABON, BUT COULD OFFER NO PRECISE EXPLANATION. HE THOUGHT MACIAS WAS UNDER GREAT STRESS AND OPINED THAT BORDER INCIDENT WAS PART OF FAMILIAR PATTERN OF ACTIONS DESIGNED TO CONSOLIDATE DETERIORATING INTERNAL SITUATION.

2. SAID THAT FOR SOME TIME MACIAS' TRUMP CARD HAD BEEN 3: MILLION PESETA SURPLUS IN NATIONAL ACCOUNTS WHICH APPARENTLY USED FROM TIME TO TIME TO BAIL GOEG OUT OF CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATIONS (E.G., IMPORTS OF PETROLEUM). HOWEVER, FOR ALMOST A YEAR THERE HAS BEEN MORATORIUM ON TRANSFERS OF FUNDS AS WELL AS ISSUANCE OF IMPORT LICENSES SO THAT COMPLETE MONETARY CONFUSION AND ECONOMIC STAGNATION REIGN. SEVERAL WEEKS AGO GOEG REQUESTED GOS TO SEND BANKING EXPERT TO GO OVER ACCOUNTS OF EG NATIONAL BANK, WHICH GOS SUSPECTS ARE IN COMPLETE MESS.

3. CASINELLO NOTED JOINT SPANISH-EG COMMISSION ESTABLISHED AFTER INDEPENDENCE WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET TWICE YEARLY, BUT HAS ONLY MET ONCE PER YEAR OVER PAST TWO YEARS. MEETING WAS TO HAVE BEEN HELD LAST SPRING, BUT SPANISH HAVE BEEN DRAGGING THEIR FEET, SINCE GOEG HAS ON EACH OCCASION USED JOINT COMMISSION ONLY AS VEHICLE FOR PRESENTING EXTENSIVE SHOPPING LIST. IF GOEG DESIRES MEETING, SPANISH WANT TO KNOW AGENDA ITEMS IN ADVANCE AND THEN BE ABLE TO PERSUADE OTHER MINISTRIES SUBSTANTIVELY INVOLVED TO SEND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES. IN FACE OF CURRENT SITUATION IN EG, MINISTRIES HAVE BEEN LOATHE TO BECOME INVOLVED.

4. ALTHOUGH SPANISH ARE OBLIGATED TO MAINTAIN MARITIME AND AIR CONNECTIONS TO EG, CASINELLO NOTED SPAINSH CONFIDENTIAL

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MERCHANT VESSELS NO LONGER CALL IN BATA BECAUSE OF HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS IN HARBOR. APPARENTLY MACIAS PERSUADED THE FRENCH TO UNDERTAKE HARBOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT TO BE UNDERWRITTEN BY LOAN FROM FRENCH GOVT. AT LAST MINUTE WHEN FRENCH AMBASSADOR HAD DEAL WORKED OUT AND BOTH SIDES READY TO SIGN, MACIAS INSISTED ON PAYING CASH. FRENCH PRIVATE CONTRACTOR THEN BACKED OUT AND DEAL FELL THROUGH.

5. CASINELLO SAID ATMOSPHERE OF LUNACY AND REPRESSION STILL PREVAIL. SPANISH MERCHANT SEAMEN HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND HARASSED BY POLICE WHILE ASHORE. RECENTLY MACIAS HAD ORDERED THAT "NO VEHICLES" BE ALLOWED IN PRESIDENTIAL PALACE GROUNDS SO THAT SECURITY POLICE OBLIGED ALL VISITORS TO ABANDON THEIR VEHICLES OUTSIDE AND WALK A DISTANCE OF 400 YARDS -- RAIN OR SHINE -- TO ENTRANCE. SAID ONE AMBASSADOR -- HE THOUGHT IT WAS FRENCH -- APPEARED FOR APPOINTMENT WITH MACIAS DRENCHED AFTER GETTING CAUGHT IN RAIN. MACIAS EXPLODED AT BEING TAKEN SO LITERALLY AND INSISTED (APPARENTLY WITHOUT APOLOGY) THAT PALACE SECURITY MEASURE NEVER MEANT TO APPLY TO DIPLOMATIC CORPS. NEVERTHELESS, ONE SPANISH EMBASSY OFFICER WAS ROUGHLY FRISKED BY SECURITY POLICE ON SIMILAR OCCASION.

6. SPANISH FEAR THAT CONDITIONS WILL DETERIORATE INTO ANARCHY TO ADVANTAGE OF SOVIETS AND CUBANS WHO WOULD CAUSE TROUBLE IN WHOLE AREA. THOUGHT THIS ASPECT PROBABLY CONCERNED NIGERIA, CAMEROONS, AND GABON AS WELL. SPANISH HAD NO REAL STRATEGIC OR ECONOMIC INTERESTS BUT BELIEVED THAT ABANDONMENT OF EG WOULD ONLY BRING DOWN WRATH OF OTHER AFRICAN NATIONS WHO WOULD POINT FINGERS AT GOS FOR THIS UNHAPPY RESULT OF 400 YEARS OF SPANISH COLONIALISM. HENCE SPANISH WERE ANXIOUS TO BROADEN EG CONTACTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND PULL MACIAS OUT OF HIS ISOLATION. WERE ENCOURAGED BY RECENT VISIT OF SOUTH KOREAN DELEGATION WHICH WELCOMED BY MACIAS AND APPARENTLY TOLD THAT ROK COULD ESTABLISH EMBASSY, DESPITE PRESENCE OF NORTH KOREANS. HOPEFULLY SOUTH KOREANS WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE SOME ASSISTANCE. SPANISH AMBASSADOR TO OTTAWA HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO APPROACH CANADIANS TO

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ENCOURAGE THEIR INTEREST, AND SPANISH ALSO HOPED TO FOCUS ON SOME (AS YET UNDETERMINED) LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY. CASINELLO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT USG AT SOME POINT COULD BECOME SIMILARLY ATTENTIVE.

7. SPANISH THIS YEAR WILL PROVIDE EG WITH LARGE QUANTITY OF FLOUR GOVT TO GOVT, AND AN UNDETERMINED AMOUNT OF RICE THROUGH PRIVATE CHANNELS. THESE ARE COMMODITIES PREVIOUSLY SUPPLIED BY SOVIETS AND CHINESE, AND SPANISH BELIEVE THIS, LIKE OPENING WITH ROK, PROVIDES SOME INDICATION THAT MACIAS MIGHT BE BROUGHT AROUND.

8. COMMENT: CASINELLO'S COMMENTS POINT UP THE AMBIVALENCE WITH WHICH SPANISH GOVT AS A WHOLE VIEWS

ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS FORMER COLONY. ON ONE HAND IS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CONCERNED FOR SPAIN'S
REPUTATION AND PRESTIGE AMONG AFRICAN NATIONS,
PARTICULARLY IN FACE OF EVER-INCREASING PRESSURES ON
SPANISH SAHARA, ON THE OTHER ARE RELUCTANT MINISTRIES
SUBSTANTIVELY INVOLVED IN SPAIN'S COMMERCIAL AND
FINANCIAL RELATION WITH EG, LESS MOTIVATED BY
QUESTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE, AND FED UP WITH
TRYING TO DO BUSINESS WITH MACIAS. THEY MUST BE CAJOLED
AND BROUGHT ALONG BY THE MFA WHENEVER THERE IS BUSINESS
TO BE DONE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECURITY, COMMODITIES, TRADE, BORDER INCIDENTS, POLICE FORCES, IMPORT LICENSES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MADRID04509
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740190-0619
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740746/aaaabmuk.tel
Line Count: 181
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LIBREVILLE 0850
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 APR 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <07-Aug-2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EQUATORIAL GUINEA-GABON BORDER INCIDENTS
TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, PBOR, GB, EK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005